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BIDEN QUITS U.S. PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Endorses Kamala Harris as the new nominee; first prez to abandon campaign for re-election over concerns of mental acuity

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.

July 21, 2024

My Fellow Americans,

Over the past three and a half years, we have made great progress as a Nation.

Today, America has the strongest economy in the world. We've made historic investments in rebuilding our Nation, in lowering prescription drug costs for seniors, and in expanding affordable health care to a record number of Americans. We've provided critically needed care to a million veterans exposed to toxic substances. Passed the first gun safety law in 30 years. Appointed the first African American woman to the Supreme Court. And passed the most significant climate legislation in the history of the world. America has never been better positioned to lead than we are today.

I know none of this could have been done without you, the American people. Together, we overcame a once in a century pandemic and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We've protected and preserved our Democracy. And we've revitalized and strengthened our alliances around the world.

It has been the greatest honor of my life to serve as your President. And while it has been my intention to seek reelection, I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down and to focus solely on fulfilling my duties as President for the remainder of my term.

I will speak to the Nation later this week in more detail about my decision.

For now, let me express my deepest gratitude to all those who have worked so hard to see me reelected. I want to thank Vice President Kamala Harris for being an extraordinary partner in all this work. And let me express my heartfelt appreciation to the American people for the faith and trust you have placed in me.

I believe today what I always have: that there is nothing America can't do – when we do it together. We just have to remember we are the United States of America.

Joe Biden

AGENCIES @Washington

AFTER ignoring calls to quit the presidential race for weeks, US President Joe Biden on Sunday dropped out of the presidential election and endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic Party's new nominee. The dramatic announcement came less than a month before the Democratic National Convention, set to start on August 19.

The 81-year-old was under tremendous pressure from Democrats following a disastrous debate performance. Biden's decision to leave the race, though not unexpected, would force Republican candidate Donald Trump to change his strategy.

"While it has been my intention to seek reelection, I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down and focus solely on fulfilling my duties as President for the remainder of my term," Biden said in a letter on X while recovering from Covid at his beach house in Delaware.

Biden said he would "speak to the nation later this week in more detail about my decision."

He later added that he was backing Harris — who is the first female, Black and South Asian vice president in US history, and will now be aiming to become its first female commander-in-chief.

"Today I want to offer my full support and endorsement for Kamala to be the nominee of our party this year," Biden said on X. "Democrats - it's time to come together and beat Trump. Let's do this."

Biden is the first president in US history to pull out so late in an election race, and the first to bow out because of concerns over his mental acuity and health.

Trump quickly reacted, saying Biden had not been "fit to run" or "fit to serve" as president.

House Speaker Mike Johnson also called for Biden's resignation. "If Biden is not fit to run for president, he is not fit to serve as president. He must resign immediately," he said.

Biden spent more than three weeks resisting calls to step down following the shock of the June 27 debate, at one point insisting that only the "Lord Almighty" could convince him to back out.

To show he was up to the job, he gave a number of interviews, but made further gaffes. P11

WHAT NEXT

- With Biden stepping aside, Democrats will technically begin an open convention next month
- Biden has endorsed Kamala Harris as the Democratic nominee. She must work to win support of 4,000 delegates and 700 super delegates
- Given Harris' strong support among Black women, analysts say it would be risky for Democrats to pass her over for a white nominee
- Others that could be considered are: Governors Gavin Newsom, Gretchen Whitmer and Josh Shapiro

Budget session to be stormy as Oppn, allies raise heat

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR
@New Delhi

DROPPING hints that the Budget session of Parliament starting Monday is going to be stormy, the all-party meeting on Sunday saw Opposition parties demanding discussion on a number of contentious issues, including the NEET fiasco, the UP government's order to eateries on the Kanwar Yatra route, among others. Misuse of central agencies, Centre-state relations, and Lok Sabha deputy speaker post were among the other issues the Opposition parties wanted discussion on.

But what will put the BJP-led government in a tricky situation is the demand by the Opposition as well as some BJP allies JD(U) and LJP for special status for states. The JD(U), the BJD and the YSR Congress Party demanded the status for Bihar, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, respectively

As many as 55 leaders from 44 parties attended the meeting. In a bid to signal its political outreach, the government had invited a number of smaller parties, including some having only one MP. While most opposition parties participated in the meeting, the Trinamool Congress chose to skip it.

At the meeting, which lasted for over three hours, the Congress batted for the post of deputy speaker in the Lok Sabha for Opposition while the AAP raised serious concerns against the alleged misuse of central agencies such as ED and CBI.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh, who chaired the meet, appealed to all parties for the smooth conduct of Parliament. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the government is willing to discuss all issues in accordance with the rules. Most Opposition parties criticised the Uttar Pradesh government's fiat that eateries and shops along the Kanwar Yatra route must display owners' names, terming it 'communal and divisive'.

The Budget session will have 19 sittings till August 12 when the government is expected to present six bills, including the one to replace the 90-year-old Aircraft Act.

NEET, Kanwar yatra pleas in SC today

The SC will on Monday hear a batch of petitions related to the NEET-UG 2024. The apex court will also hear a petition against the Uttar Pradesh government's order that eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route must display the names of their owners

Economic Survey to be presented today

The Economic Survey 2023-24 will be presented in the Lok Sabha at 1 pm and in the Rajya Sabha at 2 pm on Monday. The survey gives details about the economic progress the country made in the previous year. The Union Budget will be presented on Tuesday | P12

MAHA CAMPAIGN

In rare attack on Pawar, Amit Shah calls him 'ringleader of corruption'

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI
@Mumbai

UNION Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday launched an unusually blistering attack on Opposition leader Sharad Pawar, calling him the 'sargana of corruption' (ring leader of corruption). Shah's attack drew an equally sharp response from the NCP (SP), which called the BJP, "a washing machine" that legitimises corruption.

Shah was speaking at the BJP's state convention in Pune, kick-starting the party's elections campaign for the upcoming assembly elections.

"They (Opposition) talk about corruption, but the biggest leader of corruption in Indian politics is Sharad Pawar and I have no confusion when I say this. Sharad Pawar institutionalised corruption in many governments of this country," Shah alleged. Shah also said whenever Sharad Pawar's government comes to power, Maratha reservations go out. "Therefore, if we want Maratha reservations, Sharad Pawar should not be voted to power," Shah added.

He said Rahul Gandhi has become arrogant after the Opposition's surprisingly strong performance in the Lok Sabha polls. "Once we win... assembly polls later this year, Rahul Gandhi's arrogance will be crushed," Shah said.

Responding to Shah's attack on Pawar, NCP (SP) spokesperson Clyde Crasto said, "They accuse political leaders of corruption, and then once those who they accuse join BJP, they are all given a clean chit."

CM meets residents at landslide site

Shirur: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah visited the landslide area at Shirur on Ankola-Kumta road in Uttara Kannada district on Sunday, spending more than an hour inspecting the damage and interacting with the locals. He directed the officials to provide relief to the needy | P5

We will not protect the guilty. We will initiate action against those responsible, once the rescue operations are completed

Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

Rescue personnel at the landslide site at Shirur village in Ankola taluk of Uttara Kannada district on Sunday | @HEMANTH

Army team in Ankola to take up search ops

SUBHASH CHANDRA N S
@Shirur (Uttara Kannada)

A 44-member team of the Maratha Light Infantry Regiment from Belagavi has been deputed to carry out the search and rescue operations at the landslide site at Shirur village in Ankola taluk of Uttara Kannada district. They will look for missing persons, especially for Kasargod-based Arjun, amid the rubble. Arjun, a truck driver, was transporting timber from Jagalpet in Joida taluk when the area was hit by the landslide six days ago.

The Army personnel have been deployed after severe criticism by Kerala media over the slow-paced rescue operations at the site.

"The Army unit has arrived here. It was decided yesterday (Sunday). We have NDRF, SDRF and Army personnel working now. We hope there will be quicker results," said a senior district administration official. Uttara Kannada Deputy Commissioner Lakshmi Priya said there was a request from the Kerala government to expedite the rescue operations and the district administration decided to seek Army's assistance. "We feel the truck could be buried under the debris. The Army unit will be here for four days," she added.

Asked whether Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan himself called to expedite the process, she said, "The Kerala transport minister had called."

The Army unit will search the Gangavalli river where the truck is suspected to be stuck. They will be helped by NDRF, ASDRF and district police.

SP Narayan said the Army unit is quite experienced in rescue operations. "This team is not ordinary. It has members who worked in Himachal Pradesh in rescue operations."

CONTINUED ON: P7

B'desh SC dials down govt job quota behind deadly unrest

AGENCIES @Dhaka

THE Bangladesh Supreme Court on Sunday pared back the contentious quotas for government jobs after days of clashes between students and security forces that have killed at least 155 people.

Protests erupted after a lower court last month ordered that a scheme, that reserved 56% of government jobs for select applicants, be brought back. It had been scrapped by the Sheikh Hasina government in 2018 amid protests by youngsters.

Critics accused the government of using the scheme to stack public jobs with loyalists to Hasina's ruling Awami League. The Supreme Court on Sunday decided that the lower court's order to reintroduce the scheme was "illegal". The court curtailed the number of reserved jobs from 56% to 7%, AFP reported.

It reserved 5% of all government jobs for the children "freedom fighters" who took part in the 1971 liberation war, down from 30%. One percent is reserved for tribal communities, and another one percent for people with disabilities.

The remaining 93% of positions would be decided on merit, the court ruled. This, however, has failed to mollify university student leaders, with students calling for a complete abolition of the "freedom fighter" category. "We won't call off our protests until the government issues an order reflecting our demands," Students Against Discrimination, a student group leading the protests has said.

Reports said soldiers were patrolling cities across Bangladesh on Sunday after riot police failed to restore order.

In an update on Sunday, the Ministry of External Affairs said that over 4,500 Indian students have returned from Bangladesh.

Soldiers and special forces stand guard at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on Sunday. The court was hearing pleas on government quota | AFP

Our doors open: Didi

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday said she would keep the doors of her state open for people in distress from Bangladesh. "There is a UN Resolution to accommodate refugees in regions adjacent to those under turmoil," she said | P9

EXPRESS READ

3 killed in landslide on Kedarnath trek route

Rudraprayag: Three devotees died and eight others were injured in a landslide on the Kedarnath Dham trek route in Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand on Sunday. The incident happened around 7.30 am on the Gaurikund-Kedarnath route when the devotees were hit with boulders and debris | P10

'Op All Out' in J&K: Addl troops to be deployed

Srinagar: The security agencies will soon launch 'Operation All Out' in Jammu to tackle militancy in the region, which has emerged as a new militant hotspot in the last few years. Over 3,500 security personnel would be deployed especially in border districts | P10

Mys to Siachen: Capt Supreetha breaks barriers

KARTHIK K K @Mysuru

IN a remarkable achievement, Captain Supreetha CT from Mysuru has become the first woman officer from the Corps of Army Air Defence to be operationally deployed at the formidable Siachen Glacier, the world's highest battlefield.

Born to Thirumalesh, a police sub-inspector, and Nirmala, a homemaker, Supreetha's journey from the serene Mysuru to the treacherous terrains of Siachen has emerged as a testament to her unwavering determination and pioneering spirit.

In 2021, Supreetha's military dreams took flight when she was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Army. Rigorous training at the Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Chennai prepared her for her role in the Army Air Defence unit. Her service saw her deployed in strategic locations, like Anantnag, Jabalpur and Leh. Her posting to Siachen Glacier came on July 18, said Thirumalesh, who hails from Chamarajanagar district.

Capt Supreetha CT (inset) crosses a gorge at Siachen Glacier

Thirumalesh, an SI at the Talakadu Police Station, expressed immense pride in his daughter's achievements. "Supreetha has always been determined and focused. Her journey to Siachen is a dream come true for her and an inspiration to many," he said.

Supreetha studied at Shastri Vidya Samsthe in Hunsur, St Mary's in HD Kote, St Joseph's in KR Nagar and Marimallappa's School in Mysuru. She pursued LLB at JSS Law College and also got her BBA.

During her studies, she earned the NCC Air Wing C Certificate, represented Karnataka at the All-India Vayu Sainik Camp, and marched in the prestigious Republic Day Parade in New Delhi in 2016.

Supreetha married Major Jerry Blaiz, son of Col (retd) Richard Blaize and Lt Col Vijayalakshmi, in 2024. The couple had made headlines as the first pair to participate together in this year's Republic Day parade.

IT staff worry over 14-hr workday, its consequences

PURAN CHOUDHARY @Bengaluru

THE Karnataka government is looking at amending the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishment Act 2024 in close consultation with industrialists and businesses.

But it is kicking up a storm among employees, especially in the IT and ITeS sector, as they are worried that work hours per day could be increased from the present 10 hours to 14 hours.

The Karnataka State IT/ITeS/BPO Employees Union (KITU) stated that under the new amendments, the government aims to extend the work hours and normalise a 70-hour work week.

Neeti Sharma, CEO, Teamlease, said if the government passes the amendment, it will have many consequences on not only employee health, but also the overall productivity of a company. CONTINUED ON: P3

PhonePe CEO apologises for job quota criticism

Bengaluru: PhonePe co-founder and CEO Sameer Nigam on Sunday tendered an unconditional apology after several people in the state began boycotting the digital payment app following his criticism of the proposed job reservation bill. P4